

RICERCHE

Francesco Bonatelli: A Critical (Experience-grounded) Approach to Consciousness and Human Subject between Spiritualism and Positivism

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Abstract In the context of nineteenth-century philosophical reflection, Francesco Bonatelli (1830-1911) set himself the following goal: to defend the pillars of Spiritualism (the existence of a human subject with intellectual or supra-sensitive cognitive functions) and ontology (the notions of *esse* and *substantia*) through an careful examination of psychic contents and consciousness, while closely contesting both the psychology and the psychophysiology of Positivism (without rejecting its results *in toto*) and Spiritualism itself (with all its uncritical assumptions and unnecessary metaphysical speculations). In works such as *Pensiero e conoscenza* (1864), *La coscienza e il meccanesimo interiore* (1872), and *Percezione e pensiero* (1892-1895) Bonatelli puts forward his “critical experience-grounded philosophy” and proposes an original solution to the problem of the nature of the subject, (self-)consciousness and its unity, using an analysis of “sentiments” to reveal the inseparable tangle of the cognitive and ontological dimensions of the self.

KEYWORDS: Positivism; Consciousness; Self-consciousness; *Actus essendi*; Substance; Gnoseology

Riassunto *Francesco Bonatelli: un approccio critico (a base sperimentale) alla coscienza e al soggetto umano tra spiritualismo e positivism* – Nel contesto della riflessione filosofica dell'Ottocento, Francesco Bonatelli (1830-1911) scelse come proprio ufficio la difesa dei capisaldi dello spiritualismo (l'esistenza di un soggetto umano dotato di funzioni cognitive intellettive o sovra-sensitive) e dell'ontologia (le nozioni di *esse* e di *substantia*), mediante un attento esame dei contenuti psichici e della coscienza stessa, in un serrato confronto con la psicologia e psicofisiologia del positivismo (senza rifiutarne in blocco i risultati) e con lo spiritualismo stesso (con tutte le sue acritiche assunzioni e superfetazioni metafisiche). In opere come *Pensiero e conoscenza* (1864), *La coscienza e il meccanesimo interiore* (1872) e *Percezione e pensiero* (1892-1895), Bonatelli espone la propria “filosofia critica a base sperimentale” e propone una soluzione originale al problema della natura del soggetto, della coscienza (come auto-coscienza) e della sua unità, mostrando come nell'analisi dei sentimenti si riveli l'inscindibile intreccio delle due dimensioni, cognitiva e ontologica, dell'io.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Positivismo; Coscienza; Autocoscienza; *Actus essendi*; Sostanza; Gnoseologia

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■ Introduction: The long-term battle about self and consciousness

THE LAST TWENTY YEARS OF the eighteenth century were characterised by Kant's demolition of metaphysics, while the nineteenth century began in the name of metaphysics' revenge, that is the urgent need to establish grounds for the phenomenal level: it was a kind of philosophical Restoration in which German Idealism was not the only protagonist, but also some "independent" philosophers such as Herbart and Schopenhauer or, in the French context, Maine de Biran and Victor Cousin, to mention just a few.

By contrast, from the mid-nineteenth century, Positivism started a new fight against metaphysics, which it accused of crushing reality, preferring abstract concepts and universal principles to concrete and irrefutable facts. According to the definition of "Positivism" given by André Lalande in the *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, there are four issues which characterise Positivism (beyond various centrifugal forces):

- (1) Only the knowledge of "facts" is fruitful; (2) only the experimental sciences give a real standard of certainty; (3) continuous connection with experience and refusal of the *a priori* are the only security and safeguards against mistakes; (4) the understanding can grasp only relations and laws.¹

It is not, in fact, a matter of assuming science as a methodological reference: Positivism is characterised by a precise frame of mind, which is based on "faith" in the sciences and in the application of the outcomes of scientific enquiries concerning the natural world and the subject.

Faced with both the development of sciences (which undoubtedly played an important role in promoting the above-mentioned "positivistic frame of mind")² and the gradual strengthening of Positivism, trust in the positivity of ontology and metaphysics, among the followers of Italian philosophers –

such as Vincenzo Gioberti, Antonio Rosmini and Terenzio Mamiani – had become a reassuring *leitmotiv* repeated with obstinacy, rather than a well-founded assertion. This is particularly the case if one considers the fact that spiritualistic philosophy (Italian or other) was unable to descend to the same level as the positivists and respond in the positivists' own language.

Now, focusing on the central topic of this paper, Francesco Bonatelli (1830-1911) chose to defend the tenets of both Spiritualism and ontology by means of a careful examination of psychic contents and consciousness. From the brief early essay *Sulla sensazione* (1852) [*On Sensation*] to the last pamphlet, *Sulla conoscibilità dell'Io* (1909) [*On the Knowableness of the Self*], passing through his main works, such as *Pensiero e conoscenza* (1864) [*Thinking and Knowledge*], *La coscienza e il meccanismo interiore* (1872) [*Consciousness and Inner Mechanism*], *Discussioni gnoseologiche* (1885) [*Gnoseological Discussions*], *Percezione e pensiero* [*Perception and Thinking*] (3 vols., published in the last decade of the nineteenth century), and *Studi d'epistemologia* (1905) [*Studies on Epistemology*], he engaged in an intense debate with positivistic psychology and psychophysiology. He did not totally reject their results, but conducted a thorough discernment of what is actually furnished by the observation of consciousness and what is, instead, introduced as an interpretation of the real "positive data" in the spirit of adhesion to a system, thereby performing an illicit «castration» of the experience.³

At the same time, Bonatelli showed he was not in full agreement even with spiritualistic philosophy itself, since it was not exempt from Bonatelli's experience-based criticism (quite a different criticism from that of Kant, or Mach's empirio-criticism, and much more similar to Brentano's psychology as well as to phenomenology, because it is capable of an integral openness to experience). Bonatelli's decisive methodological rejection of the concepts of soul and faculties, and his denial of innatism (and, perhaps, also of *apriorism*,

which had been a “step forward” compared to radical innatism),⁴ are examples of this harsh filtering of Spiritualism from each and every uncritical assumption and unnecessary metaphysical speculations.⁵

My purpose is to underline the fact that Bonatelli’s critical gnoseology resulted in a theory of consciousness (and its reflexive essence), which could be quite useful for the psycho-philosophical reflections of the present day in two ways: on the one hand, it is able to address the complex nature of the human being, by virtue of rejecting any attempt at reductionism (indirectly warning against some contradictions concealed in the uncritical adoption of the neurophysiological approach in studying the self and consciousness); on the other hand, having brought to light some aspects of the “mode of being” of the self, it can provide some interesting suggestions in the context of current philosophical realism (preventing the need for any response to constructivism turning into an ingenuous “common sense realism”).

Psychological unity of consciousness: The first half of “self”

Let us consider the following passage taken from *Discussioni gnoseologiche* [*Gnoseological Discussions*], in which we can find the intersection and blending of all the topics that the Italian philosopher dealt with in his works:

The sensations, as we say, are for example the red, the green, the hard [...] Or are they rather the red seen, the hard touched, the sound heard? However, this is still not enough; because, even so, we are still on the level of abstraction [...] Seen by whom? Heard by whom? This is where forgetfulness and, then, the mistake are to be found. If we stop at the first abstraction, the subject is limited to the abstract unity of sensations. [...] If one stops at the second abstraction, if in addition to the content of sensation one also

assumes the presence of the sensation [...], the subject is restricted to representing, and even this is reduced to a minimum, a shadow of activity, the theatre where the representations move, which is a less abstract kind of unity than the first one. But let’s get to the core of the problem, let’s get to the “who”, that is to the living and actual subject, to the real unity [...]; only then shall we grasp the sensation as a real and concrete fact, in all its essence.⁶

Bonatelli hereby proposes a climax through which he attempts to lead the reader to the reconquest of the subject’s deep unity, beyond those individual aspects which the different philosophical systems focused on: we can find, in order of appearance, Condillac’s Sensism,⁷ Ardigò’s Positivism (which is, in many respects, the French philosopher’s direct heir), Humean Empiricism (with the theory that the subject is a “bundle” of sensations),⁸ and Kantian criticism.⁹ They are all to blame for “abstractions”, for isolating some aspects of the unique “knowing event” and then absolutising their value.

This is an exhortation to comprehend the living and actual unity of the subject (that is, a unity always in act) which recalls both Rosmini’s thought and Lotze’s philosophical reflections (these philosophers are Bonatelli’s constant landmarks).¹⁰

However, as I stated before, we are going to examine the climax: on the one hand, Ardigò’s Positivism affirms that a sensation (either single or associated, either concrete or abstract, namely formed by the confluence or superimposition of various distinct sensations) is characterised by “cognitive self-sufficiency”, meaning there is an identity of the psychic fact with the consciousness of it (this means that the psychic experience is a self-manifestation of an uninterrupted psychic flow which does not need a knowing subject).¹¹ On the other hand, Bonatelli upholds a conception according to which perception is a “finding act” (*inventio* in the etymological sense of the term), whereby the

subject is “intentionally directed” to a content grasped in its structure and in its “being in front” of the subject.¹² Thus, for Bonatelli, the psychic fact or given does not reabsorb “the knowing” into itself as Ardigò’s “aisthema” did (that’s the meaning of what would later be called the “myth of the given”).¹³

This seeing/grasping is pre-logical since it has an un-conceptual nature (a sort of “original offering vision” Bonatelli proposed already in the essay *La coscienza e il meccanismo interiore* [*Consciousness and Inner Mechanism*] (1872), long before Husserl’s phenomenology). It is also an intellectual function: indeed, the structure and the existence of a given and the structural and existential relationships, which the subject can discern, are all intrinsic elements of concrete experimental content, apprehended in an analytical way. In *Sentire e conoscere* [*Sensing and Knowing*] (1909), Bonatelli says:

Of course, the sensed content exists in the sentient subject; the sentient subject is not like a dead body or a mineral, that is, relative to others and nothing for himself [...], but the sentient subject, as mere sentient, is not aware of the in-existence [*in-habitatio*] of sensed content. [...] Both a horse and a man, for example, can be tired; but only a man can say, “I’m tired”. And [...] with the verb “to say”, I only refer to the internal act by which the tiredness is affirmed and recognized for what it is.¹⁴

Well, this thesis of the “act of consciousness” as an original act of *inventio*, does not clash with the other distinctive formulation by Bonatelli, according to which the act of consciousness is a “judging act” or a “referencing act”, expressed by the formula “A is A”. Of course, both the combination of the conception of consciousness as an “achromatic glass”, which does not alter the content given/found, and the act of consciousness as a judging act cannot do anything besides generate a contradiction.¹⁵ However, it is important to thoroughly understand what Bona-

telli means by “judgment” and “reference” in order to show that this contradiction is only apparent: the verb “is” in the formula “A is A” indicates that A, i.e., the felt sensory stimulation (where “to feel” does not mean “to perceive”, as Bonatelli firmly points out, since feeling remains within the limits of a bare sensory life), appears for the first time in the psychic field of the subject, thereby acquiring cognitive value and becoming “A”, i.e., representational content with the characteristics that we become aware of. “A” remains itself (in fact, the judgment is “A is A”), while taking on a different, higher, role.¹⁶

Together with this reduplication, that is the opposition of the content to itself, the original judgment “A is A” also implies the opposition of the content to the subject, since the former is “present to” the latter, without the subject collapsing into the given (positivistically) or *vice versa* (idealistically).¹⁷ Both subject and object remain irreducible and undisputed protagonists of the “perceiving event”: this is what Cornelio Fabro, Italian Neo-Scholastic philosopher, towards the middle of the twentieth century, called “subject-object dialectic”.¹⁸

That is why Bonatelli, in the above-mentioned passage of *Discussioni gnoseologiche* [*Gnoseological Discussions*] asked «who can hear this sound, who can see this colour?». In another major work *Percezione e pensiero* [*Perception and Thinking*], and especially in its first part, *La percezione* [*Perception*] (1892), Bonatelli offers an example taken from the everyday life to the reader, a very relevant example for the present topic: he remembers that he woke up one night and focused on two facts that had risen to consciousness, that is, the pulsing of an artery and the ticking of a pendulum.

He then began to reflect upon what it meant “to feel” these two contents (contents kept “naked” in front of him, writes Bonatelli, that is, stripped of any complex knowledge which is “known” and not just “perceived”):

I noticed that this appearance, this *percipi*, was what each of these two contents was,

that is the latter a “tic-tac” and the former a “zum-zum”. Their occasional disappearance was equivalent to their “not being” and their reappearance was equivalent to their “becoming again”. - To be for me! - One can say. Of course; but this “for me” was not given in the phenomenon. It is clear why Condillac was able to say: the statue that perceives a smell [...] considers itself an odour. It is a mistake; but we can understand it; Condillac observed that in the perception of the smell, there is only the smell. It is also a mistake, because the smell cannot say either “I’m a statue” nor “I, the smell, I am” [just as the sensation does, in fact, according to Ardigò]. The one who says “it is”, is the man, after being “in the presence” of the smell (and “being in the presence” of anything is “to be for him”). Therefore, the consciousness of a thing is the existence of that thing itself (as a “phenomenon”, that is for the conscious subject).¹⁹

Of course, this does not mean that all positivistic objections against both the necessary presence of the subject and a psychology focused on the centrality of the self are hushed-up. Bonatelli showed he was well-aware of the fact that the battle against Positivism should be fought on several fronts.

Substantial deepness of the unity of consciousness: The second half of “self”

The fifth chapter of *Discussioni gnoseologiche* [*Gnoseological Discussions*] (1885), which is entirely devoted to the question of the existence and knowability of the self, opens with the following statement:

There is no knowledge whose value has been more obstinately contested than that which relates to our own being. The least that is said about this topic, is that the subject is as unknown as the outside world, or, as Stuart Mill says, that the Self is the unknown recipient of the sensa-

tions, just as the bodies are their unknown causes. Others go much further: according to them, the subject is not only unknown in his inner nature, but also does not actually exist at all; either the sensation, as the only real being, has the power to produce two shams, that is, on the one hand that of a sentient self and, on the other hand, that of a corporeal substance, or matter, assumed to be a real being, or even better the only real being [...], generates motion, and motion generates sense, and sense generates intellect and the latter produces the sham of a sentient and thinking subject.²⁰

This criticism does not only concern the need for a self/subject who has knowledge, but also and more specifically the possibility of giving this subject the character of “substance”, that is a stronger ontological *status* than that of an epiphenomenon of sensations or the functions of bodily organs.

Now, among the philosophers who state that the self is unknown, there was, on the one hand, Herbart (one of Bonatelli’s main landmarks!), who stressed that the concept of self-consciousness based on a representative function is a contradiction in terms (since this conception conceals the danger of the *regressus ad infinitum*);²¹ on the other hand, there were Auguste Comte²² and Herbert Spencer,²³ who both suggested that a psychology based on introspection could not provide any “objective” knowledge with scientific value, because the stream of psychic contents is continuous and always *in fieri* and introspection does not ensure any “distance” between the researcher and the object of investigation. John Stuart Mill, who admitted that the subject could not be a “bundle of feelings” which recognizes itself as a “bundle”, also concluded that there is a real ground for psychic contents, although it is unknowable.²⁴

As for those who denied the reality of the self and reduced it to an “unnecessary” creation of psychic dynamics or brain processes,

Roberto Ardigò (1828-1920) was certainly the most prominent representative in Italy: the “Me” is nothing but a very general “frame” in which all possible sensations and association chains are organised. It is a bare pattern composed of sensations that differ only in degree of distinction, perseverance, and chronological priority, so that there is no real distinction (if not grounded on habit) between “inside” and “outside”, between “Me” and “Not-me”. In *La psicologia come scienza positiva* [*Psychology as Positive Science*] (1870), Ardigò writes:

In the beginning, what is now known as “outside” and “inside”, was in consciousness without being considered as such: [...] the distinction is a habit of the mind which was gradually formed.²⁵

According to Ardigò, there is neither a single subject with a strong identity, nor an absolute unity of consciousness: on the one hand, from the psychological point of view, there is only an associative chain; on the other hand, from the organic point of view, there is only the uniqueness of the brain and the interconnection of its neural areas.²⁶

Bonatelli’s answer is clear and firm and, being in accordance with the approach of experimental psychology, this reply is also incisive: firstly, the self is actually able to turn its attention on itself (showing the character of intellectual self-transparency), without giving rise to a *regressum ad infinitum*, because this infinite reflection is virtually implicit in every act of perception and, thus, does not interrupt the psycho-cognitive dynamics.²⁷ Furthermore, an examination of the contents of consciousness shows that all psychic givens are neither sensations, nor referable to sensations (just like their aspects: he refers to both Ardigò’s and Wundt’s theses, according to which pleasure and pain would be the “hedonistic quality” or the “tone” of sensations).²⁸

The sentiments, stresses Bonatelli, as is apparent to those who are able to suspend all prejudices and only consider what appears to consciousness, are original and irreducible to

the sensitive and imaginative field: indeed, the subject is not only the spectator or witness of the sentiments, since he is intrinsically involved in psychic contents such as pleasure and pain. In the sentiment, the subject reveals itself as a living core, which can give to psychic contents and to consciousness, too, a radical and deep, intimate unity. This is much more than what bare associative connections can do. In the second part of *Percezione e pensiero* [*Perception and Thinking*], *La percezione interna* [*Inner Perception*] (1894), Bonatelli writes:

Let us talk about sentiments. A peculiar character by which they are distinguished, in particular, from representations (whether immediate or reproduced) is that sentiments immediately and clearly show their relationship with the subject. In fact, representations may occupy our attention exclusively with their content [...] without allowing a judgment arise in our consciousness that ascribes them to us as objects [...] On the psychic horizon, it is possible that nothing else other than just the object appears, leaving in the shadow, as it were, its (perceptive) relationship with the perceiving subject. However, in the case of sentiments, this relationship is always explicit, because it is not only contained in perceiving them, but it is part of what is perceived. [...] If [...] I feel some pain, but while it remains alone in the field of attention, the perceived object can not be reduced to bare pain, to this pain; on the contrary, this is MY pain.²⁹

According to Bonatelli, one can reach the full and authentic meaning of both the subject and of consciousness by analysing the sentiments; therefore, consciousness becomes «not only what is most intimate, most personal, most incommunicable, but also the active core of our own being».³⁰

There are two aspects of consciousness: one is purely cognitive (the “achromatic glass” that does not affect the content: the pure cog-

nitive self) and the other is ontological (what the Thomists called the *actus essendi*, the *substratum* of states and actions).

The analysis of attention clearly shows that these two aspects are not juxtaposed, but identical, simultaneously present, inseparable (although distinguishable), because the subject's attention awakens, focuses on a content and distinguishes it from others by virtue of the sentiment.³¹

In the careful examination of the sentiment lies the toughest and most positive criticism against both the positivistic demolition of the unity of consciousness and Rosmini's unsuccessful efforts to save ontology by means of the innate idea of the "absolute and universal being". In keeping with Bonatelli and in direct continuity with his outcomes, Giuseppe Zamboni (1875-1950), Italian Neo-Scholastic who was one of Bonatelli's students at the University of Padua (in 1897-1899),³² described the self (more specifically, "myself") as «the last receptacle of the knowledge of being»,³³ and titled his main work *La persona umana. Soggetto autocosciente nell'esperienza integrale. Termine della gno-seologia. Base della metafisica* [*The Human Person. Self-conscious Subject within the Integral Experience. Object of the Gnoseology. Basis of the Metaphysics*] (1940).

Similarly, Luigi Stefanini (1891-1956), summarized his own philosophical personalism in the following sentence from *La mia prospettiva filosofica* [*My Philosophical Perspective*] (1950): «No metaphysics can be erected, if its first chapter is not psychological».³⁴ That means that the metaphysics of being (*esse*, in Aristotelico-Scholastic terms), since it is only focused on abstract concepts, should be backed by (or grounded on) a thorough analysis of the factual experience of the human person, where we can find the "being" in its actual and living manifestation.³⁵

According to Bonatelli, in the sentiment we can find the self-presence and the self-manifestation of that *SUM* from which one can obtain, by means of abstraction, the idea of *esse*. For this reason, in *La coscienza e il*

meccanesimo interiore (1872) [*Consciousness and Inner Mechanism*], Bonatelli states:

We must not mistake the metaphysical notion of substance, which the philosopher attains by means of speculations and abstractions, for the immediate apprehension of it, that also the most common people possess. [...] I've always said that in the sentiment man is conscious of his own substance, not that in it he can contemplate the pure notion of substance. As for the desire to go even further [...], when we arrive, in any being, at the centre of its life, which is the sentiment, one does not go any further, and neither does one remain there, digging [...] where there is nothing to dig, or one climbs without realising it and goes back to the upper layers of phantoms and concepts taken from the phenomenal world. In the sentiment – this is the expression that I usually availed myself of – we become conscious of our reality and substantial unity. Now this [...] means that [...] in the sentiment, the substance is in-itself and, therefore, the consciousness of its own sentiment is the consciousness of what happens not only within the substance itself, but also with the full participation of the being in which it happens; it is the consciousness of an act which proceeds from the substance, [...], or rather, of an act which ends and accomplishes its intention in the origin whence it arose, or, even better, it is the consciousness of an act which is the proper being of the substance.³⁶

Conclusion: The twofold unity of consciousness

In this paper I attempted to highlight the originality of Bonatelli's thought and the reasons why his reflections should now be re-taken into account: looking beyond some obscurities that undermined reception of his thought, we must focus on his proto-phenomenological approach to consciousness

and its contents, which constitutes the ground of his eclecticism and his escape from those influences he struggled under, from both a lexical and conceptual point of view, due to the general context of his time and to key philosophers such as Herbart, Lotze, and Rosmini.

By means of the examination of what is immediately present to consciousness, Bonatelli can identify the source of both the Positivist and Idealistic contradictions concerning perception and redress the balance between subject and object. However, above all, he penetrates the more apparent unity of consciousness, that is the psychological one, to find a deeper unity of consciousness which is based on the ontological (substantial) unity of the subject (so that we can then state that all the phenomena of the psychic level exist and participate in a person's life and being – *esse*).

Therefore, being substance and becoming conscious to himself of his own substantial nature,³⁷ the subject is able to approach the “objects” of outward perception (that is the sensitive and imaginative complexes) endowed with all the ontological concepts which he applies as long as experience so allows (by means of analogy).³⁸

This does not entail drifting into Idealism, since the role played by the subject (who is both protagonist and object of the experience, together with all his functions, states, and acts) has only to rediscover the depth of reality giving voice to the whole experience and the demands which the latter exhibits (demands that would not have manifested themselves without the subject and his specific essence): it is a realism purged of any ingenuity, therefore a critical realism.

Notes

¹ A. LALANDE, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* (1926), vol. II, Quadrige-PUF, Paris 1993, p. 599. My translation from the original French text.

² A. SANTUCCI (a cura di), *Scienza e filosofia della cultura positivista*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1982; S. POGGI, *Introduzione al positivismo*, Laterza, Ro-

ma-Bari 1999, pp. 13-26, 83-91, 133-136.

³ This is the very expression used by Bonatelli in the essay titled *Discussioni gnoseologiche* [*Gnoseological Discussions*]: see F. BONATELLI, *Discussioni gnoseologiche e note critiche*, Tipografia di G. Antonelli, Venezia 1885, p. 169 [my translation from the original Italian text].

⁴ I refer to Bonatelli's examination of the “idea of space”; see D. POGGI, *La coscienza e il meccanesimo interiore. Francesco Bonatelli, Roberto Ardigò, Giuseppe Zamboni*, Poligrafo, Padova 2007, pp. 222-255.

⁵ See G. LANDUCCI, *La struttura del pensare in Francesco Bonatelli*, in: R. CRIPPA (a cura di), *Figure del pensiero italiano contemporaneo. Aspetti e momenti della filosofia italiana contemporanea. Bonatelli, Varisco, Tredici*, Tipo-Lito Fratelli Geroldi, Brescia 1982, pp. 85-130, here pp. 88-93, 124-129.

⁶ F. BONATELLI, *Discussioni gnoseologiche*, cit., p. 147 [my translation from the original Italian text].

⁷ See É. BONNOT DE CONDILLAC, *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* (1746), in: É. BONNOT DE CONDILLAC, *Œuvres Complètes*, tome I, éd. par A.F. THÉRY, Lecoq & Durey-Tourneux, Paris 1821-1822 [anast. reproduit: Slatkine reprints, Genève 1970], I, 1, 1, pp. 12-13; I, 2, 1, pp. 27-29; I, 2, 8, pp. 85-86.

⁸ See D. HUME, *An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature* (1740), a hitherto unknown pamphlet, reprinted with an introduction by J.M. KEYNES, P. SRAFFA, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1938, pp. 24-25; this text is also reprinted in: D.F. NORTON, M.J. NORTON (eds.), *The Clarendon Edition of the Works of Hume*, vol. I, critical edition by D.F. NORTON, M.J. NORTON, Clarendon Press, Oxford 2007, p. 414.

⁹ See I. KANT, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B 134, in: I. KANT, *Werke*, Bd. III, Akademie-Textausgabe, Unveränderter photomechanischer Abdruck des Textes der von der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1902 begonnenen Ausgabe von Kants gesammelten Schriften, W. de Gruyter & Co., Berlin 1968. See the English translation of the Kantian text: I. KANT, *Critique of Pure Reason*, edited by P. GUYER, A.W. WOOD, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000, pp. 247-248.

¹⁰ See F. BONATELLI, *La coscienza e il meccanesimo interiore*, Premiata Tipografia e Stereotipia alla Minerva dei Fratelli Salmin, Padova 1872, pp. 29-65; see also S. LANDUCCI, *La struttura del pensare in Francesco Bonatelli*, cit., pp. 104-105.

¹¹ See R. ARDIGÒ, *La psicologia come scienza positi-*

va (1870), in: R. ARDIGÒ, *Opere filosofiche*, vol. I, Luigi Colli Editore, Mantova 1882, pp. 139-154; R. ARDIGÒ, *Il Vero*, in: R. ARDIGÒ, *Opere Filosofiche*, vol. V, Angelo Draghi Editore, Padova 1891, pp. 43-50, 133-140.

¹² See F. BONATELLI, *Discussioni gnoseologiche*, cit., pp. 53-55.

¹³ See R. ARDIGÒ, *Estema, idea, logismo*, in: R. ARDIGÒ, *Opere Filosofiche*, vol. XI, Angelo Draghi Editore, Padova 1912, pp. 175-211, here pp. 181-182 (this essay has already been published in «Rivista di Filosofia», a continuation of «Rivista Filosofica» and «Rivista di Filosofia e Scienze Affini», vol. III, June 1911).

¹⁴ F. BONATELLI, *Sentire e conoscere*, Tipografia Carlo Collini, Prato 1909, p. 10 [my translation from the original Italian text].

¹⁵ The phenomenological explication regarding this apparent contradiction suggested by Bonatelli is quite interesting: F. BONATELLI, *Alcuni schiarimenti intorno alla natura del conoscere, del volere, della coscienza e della percezione*, in: «Rivista Filosofica», vol. VI, n. 5/1, 1903, pp. 3-12, here pp. 9-12. According to Gnesotto, the definition of the original “perceiving act” as a “psychological judgement” (this is the very expression used by Gnesotto) is the real innovation introduced by Bonatelli in the Italian philosophy of the 19th century: see A. GNESOTTO, *Il pensiero filosofico di Francesco Bonatelli*, Randi, Padova 1908, p. 23, fn. 4.

¹⁶ See F. DE SARLO, *Francesco Bonatelli*, Firenze, Ufficio della «Rassegna Nazionale», Firenze 1900, pp. 4-7. According to Carlo Mazzantini, this distinction between the sensation on the one hand and the perception as an act of consciousness on the other hand seems to be an excessive deprivation of cognitive value at the expense of sensation (see C. MAZZANTINI, *La dottrina filosofica di Francesco Bonatelli*, in: «Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica», vol. XXIII, n. 1-2, 1931, pp. 105-123, here pp. 108-109). This criticism seems on the contrary to ignore that Bonatelli always defended, since his first essay *Sulla sensazione* [*On Sensation*] (1852), the original value and the independence of the sensation and the inner psychic mechanism from the overwhelming role of the intellect suggested by Rosmini: see F. BONATELLI, *Sulla sensazione. Considerazioni di Francesco Bonatelli seguite da alcuni Frammenti filosofici*, Tipografia Gilberti, Brescia 1852, pp. 52-63.

¹⁷ See DE SARLO, *Francesco Bonatelli*, cit., p. 6.

¹⁸ See C. FABRO, *Fenomenologia della percezione*

(1941), in: C. FABRO, *Opere Complete*, vol. V, ed. by CH. FERRARO, EDIVI, Roma 2006, p. 41; C. FABRO, *Percezione e pensiero* (1941), in: C. FABRO, *Opere Complete*, vol. VI, EDIVI, Roma 2008, pp. 7-8.

¹⁹ F. BONATELLI, *Percezione e pensiero*, vol. I, *La percezione*, Tipografia Ferrari, Venezia 1892, pp. 35-36, footnote [my translation from the original Italian text].

²⁰ BONATELLI, *Discussioni gnoseologiche*, cit., p. 146 [my translation from the original Italian text].

²¹ J.F. HERBART, *Lehrbuch zur Einleitung in die Philosophie* (1813), in: J.F. HERBART, *Sämtliche Werke*, IV, in kronologischer Reihenfolge, hrsg. von K. KEHRBACH, O. FLÜGEL (Neudruck der Ausgabe 1887), Scientia Verlag, Aalen 1964, pp. 158-178, 217.

²² A. COMTE, *Philosophie première (Cours de philosophie positive, leçons 1 à 45)*, présentation et notes par M. SERRES, F. DAGOGNET, A. SINACEUR, *Physique sociale (Cours de philosophie positive, leçons 46 à 60)*, présentation et notes par J.P. ENTHOVEN, Hermann, Paris 1975, p. 34.

²³ Bonatelli does not provide any bibliographical references, but he certainly refers to the second edition of Spencer's *Principles of Psychology* (where the author introduces some important changes with respect to the first edition of 1855, changes which concern the nature of the mind): H. SPENCER, *Principles of Psychology* (1855), vol. I (of II), Williams & Norgate, London 1870, p. 148. Bonatelli maybe read the French edition of this work (made by Th. Ribot and A. Espinas).

²⁴ J.S. MILL, *An Examination of William Hamilton's Philosophy and of The Principal Philosophical Questions Discussed in his Writings* [1865¹], edited by J.M. ROBSON, in: J.S. MILL, *The Collected Works*, vol. IX, University of Toronto Press-Routledge & Kegan Paul, Toronto-Buffalo 1979, p. 194; *ivi*, *Appendix to the two preceding chapters*, pp. 207-208.

²⁵ R. ARDIGÒ, *La psicologia come scienza positiva*, cit., p. 146 [my translation from the original Italian text].

²⁶ About Ardigo's conception of the auto-synthetic process, see D. POGGI, *La coscienza e il meccanesimo interiore*, cit., pp. 350-413.

²⁷ See F. BONATELLI, *Di alcune difficoltà psicologiche che si risolvono mediante il concetto dell'infinito*, in: «Transunti della Regia Accademia dei Lincei», vol. VIII, 1883-1884, pp. 228-229, fn. 1; F. BONATELLI, *Percezione e pensiero*, II, *La percezione interna*, cit., pp. 45-60; F. BONATELLI, *Intorno alla conoscibilità dell'io*, Ferrari, Venezia 1902, excerpt from «Atti del Reale Istituto Veneto di Scienze,

Lettere ed Arti», vol. LXI/II, 1901-1902, pp. 5-7 (pp. 495-497). Also see G. CALÒ, *La riflessione infinita degli atti come essenza delle funzioni spirituali secondo Bonatelli*, in: «La Cultura filosofica», vol. IV, 1910, pp. 153-154; MAZZANTINI, *La dottrina filosofica di Francesco Bonatelli*, cit., pp. 111-112; S. LANDUCCI, *La struttura del pensare in Francesco Bonatelli*, cit., p. 96, fn. 24.

²⁸ See F. BONATELLI, *Percezione e pensiero*, II, *La percezione interna*, cit., p. 14, fn. 1.

²⁹ F. BONATELLI, *Percezione e pensiero*, II, *La percezione interna*, cit., pp. 9-10 [my translation from the original Italian text].

³⁰ *Ivi*, p. 2 [my translation from the original Italian text]. See A. GNESOTTO, *Il fatto della coscienza negli scritti filosofici di Francesco Bonatelli*, Randi, Padova 1906, pp. 13-14.

³¹ See *ivi*, pp. 2-3. About the central role played by Lotze's thought concerning the relationship between sentiment and «appreciative reason», see D. POGGI, *La coscienza e il meccanesimo interiore*, cit., pp. 432-433 (and footnotes).

³² See G. ZAMBONI, *Il valore scientifico del positivismo di Roberto Ardigò e della sua "conversione"*, Società Editrice Veronese, Verona 1921, p. 5; G. ZAMBONI, *La persona umana. Soggetto autocosciente nell'esperienza integrale. Termine della gnoseologia. Base della metafisica* (1940), Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1983, p. 6; S. DE GUIDI, *Mons. Giuseppe Zamboni. Autobiografia di una personalità integrale (1875-1950)*, Archivio Storico della Curia Diocesana di Verona, Verona 2001, pp. 21 and 191-193.

³³ G. ZAMBONI, *Il valore scientifico del positivismo di Roberto Ardigò e della sua "conversione"*, cit., p. 14 [my translation from the original Italian text].

³⁴ L. STEFANINI, *La mia prospettiva filosofica* (1950), con testimonianze di A. RIGOBELLO e commento critico di R. PAGOTTO, Canova, Treviso 1996, p. 14 [my translation from the original Italian text].

³⁵ L. STEFANINI, *Metafisica della Persona* (1949), in: L. STEFANINI, *La Metafisica della Persona e altri saggi*, Libreria Liviana, Padova 1950, pp. 3-4.

³⁶ F. BONATELLI, *La coscienza e il meccanesimo interiore*, cit., pp. 62-65 [my translation from the original Italian text].

³⁷ See G.W. LEIBNIZ, *Nouveaux Essais sur l'Entendement par l'Auteur du système de l'harmonie préétablie* (1703), in: G.W. LEIBNIZ, *Die philosophischen Schriften* (1882), Band V, hrsg. von C. GERHARDT, Olms, Hildesheim/New York 1978, I, 1, § 23, p. 71: «Je voudrais bien savoir, comment nous pourrions avoir l'idée de l'estre, si nous n'estions des Estres nous mêmes, et ne trouvions ainsi l'estre en nous».

³⁸ See F. BONATELLI, *Pensiero e conoscenza*, Stabilimento Tipografico Monti, Bologna 1864, p. 5; *Percezione e pensiero*, I, *La percezione*, cit., pp. 42-48, 80-81; F. BONATELLI, *Studi d'epistemologia*, Officine Grafiche di Ferrari, Venezia 1905, pp. 31-35. This is the gnoseological core of the contemporary theory of *affordances*. About the gnoseological (or "psychogenetic", in Bonatelli's terms) approach to the theory of *affordances* of James Gibson's school of thought, see D. POGGI, *Perspectives on Experience-Based Critical Ontology. A New Interpretation of Lockean Gnoseology*, in: «Metafisica y persona. Filosofia, conocimiento y vida», vol. VII, n. 13, 2015, pp. 49-66, here pp. 64-66.